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**Formerly SSAHPC- Special Services at Home Passport Provincial Coalition!**

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June 18, 2021

Hon. Minister Todd Smith  
Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services  
438 University Ave. 7th Floor  
Toronto, ON  
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Dear Minister Smith:

Thank you for forwarding the statistical data on the Passport Program requested in our letter of April 21, 2021. As you know, we are a volunteer organization that assists families to use direct provincial funding to support their family members with disabilities to have everyday lives within their communities.

Recently we have received concerns and complaints about the PassportONE Program. The agency, presently run by Family Services Toronto, was created by your ministry in 2018 to consolidate financial administrative functions into one agency, making “invoice processing and reimbursement faster and more efficient”.

From our April 2021 survey of Passport claimants the perception is that the process was generally better before the introduction of PassportONE. The concerns and complaints fall into four categories:

**1. Delayed reimbursement time:**

80.4% of survey respondents self-administered their funding, utilizing one of the several PassportONE methods. Of these, 63% reported waiting from 3 to 8 weeks for funding for which they had received approval. Support workers must be paid on time in order to be retained, forcing families to use personal funds, rely on credit card debt, or use funds from their shelter and food budgets while awaiting reimbursement.

2. **Reimbursement rules are inflexible, inconsistent, and not individualized to client needs:**  
While families appreciated that the ministry allowed greater flexibility in funding use during COVID, they complained that the agency has not managed the criteria for reimbursement in a manner that recognizes the needs of the people they are serving. Some families were denied funding for equipment and supplies for outdoor activities that met the interests and needs of their sons or daughters, such as gardening supplies or swings. Other families were denied funding of sensory items, on the basis that such items are considered “toys”. Not all people are able to use even the simplest technology and PassportONE should have the knowledge and training to recognize this.
3. **Poor communication from within the agency:** PassportONE staff do not respond to queries about delayed reimbursement. Many families complained that if errors were made on invoices, expenses were not approved and funds not reimbursed. Families were neither notified about the errors, nor given any rationale for the denial of the claim and the delay in reimbursement. This resulted in stressful weeks of delay and confusion and multiple calls to the case manager to investigate the status of submitted invoices. This circuitous route of communication also results in a general poor understanding around the rules and regulations for funding, and confusion around any changes to expense claim eligibility such as the wage subsidy.
4. **Perception of excessive administrative costs of the agency for outcome achieved:** Among the few families who were satisfied with the PassportONE agency there was general agreement that the administrative costs were excessive for the small amount of funding -\$5000.00 per year.

**PEOPLE FOR PERSONALIZED FUNDING RECOMMENDS THE FOLLOWING CHANGES BE MADE IMMEDIATELY TO PASSPORTONE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES:**

**1. End reimbursement delays.**

Reimbursement for all invoices must be forwarded to families/clients within 4 weeks. For families who require it, there must be the option for PassportONE to advance a monthly percentage of the total Passport allocation.

In the recent MCSS document, “Journey to Belonging”, it states that reimbursement will be quicker if claims are submitted online. However, in the same document it observes that such digital practices are challenging where people may not have access to reliable internet or resources and that “meeting people’s expectations about service delivery means providing a range of options that work for them.”

**2. Clear, respectful and responsive reimbursement rules.**

All items and equipment related to disability supports accepted. The definition of appropriate accommodation is that the support or accommodation is individualized to the people’s needs. Since the staff reviewing the claim has no knowledge of the person, the appropriateness of the accommodation cannot be determined.

**3. Prompt and effective communication.**

When expenses are not reimbursed an explanation must be communicated quickly to the person/family. Further, when there are changes to submission procedures or allowed expenditure eligibility PassportONE is responsible to ensure their information is communicated quickly and effectively to all people who use Passport funds.

**4. Reduced administration costs for amounts of \$5000.00 or under:** The full amount should be deposited in the person/family's account annually with the assumption that the funding will be used for the intended purpose.

We look forward to receiving your response.

Sincerely,

Alison Ouellette and Susann Palmiere,  
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Cc:

The Honorable Jill Dunlop, Associate Minister of Children and Women's Issues  
Janet Menard, Deputy Minister of Children, Community and Social Services  
Jennifer Morris, ADM Children with Special Needs  
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